

DEVELOPING THE CULTURAL MOSAIC: 1400-1700 A.D.

The intense interaction between cultures, the relatively unstable environment, and the huge amount of new information entering the cultural systems of Native American groups in the Northern Plains caused a kind of "multiplier effect." These factors combined to cause incredibly intense cultural change. New ideas were transmitted into the region from the East, the Southwest and other areas. Population movement increased with groups apparently moving both up- and downstream along the Missouri and other rivers in the area. Eventually, because of contact with the white man, native groups were forced to move from the East and moved into the Plains of what is now South Dakota. By the time Europeans made contact with the Indian groups in the Northern Plains, the Arikara were the dominant group along the Missouri River. There was, perhaps, more change during this 300 year period than in the entire prior 16,000 or more years of habitation in the area.

Extended Middle Missouri

During the time that the Initial Coalescent was being established along the Missouri River between what are now Chamberlain and Pierre, another Middle Missouri tradition group developed. This cultural complex had a more northerly distribution than Initial Middle Missouri and has been called the Extended Middle Missouri variant. There were two major concentrations of Extended Middle Missouri

sites. At least 30 sites were located along the Missouri River between the mouth of the Knife River and a point a few miles below that is now the North Dakota-South Dakota border. The more southern groups of Extended Middle Missouri peoples had approximately a dozen sites between the Bad and Cheyenne Rivers, with at least one site, the Hickey Brothers site, as far south as present-day Lyman County. Between the mouths of the Grand and Moreau Rivers there is a 90-mile stretch of Missouri River which separated the northern and southern concentrations; approximately 5 sites were located there. Some archaeologists have suggested that the southern group of Extended Middle Missouri sites was established by the middle of the 12th Century, but most recognize a later date.

Extended and Initial Middle Missouri cultural complexes were very similar but there were some differences. Extended Middle Missouri pottery was characterized by simple stamped or plain bodies but pottery from Initial Middle Missouri sites had either cord-roughened or plain bodies, especially those of the early periods. The later Initial Middle Missouri sites, especially those close to the Bad-Cheyenne region, picked up the technique of simple stamping from the Extended groups at a later time. The Initial Middle Missouri groups appear to have transmitted their concept of lodge entryways to the Extended Middle Missouri groups. Both cultures lived in large, fortified earthlodge villages. This probably indicated that there was some conflict between the two groups. There is evidence of this conflict at

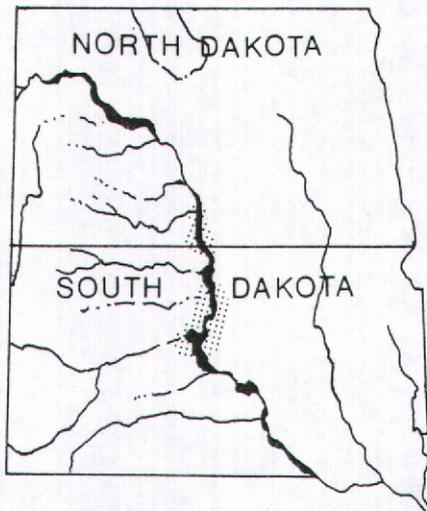


Fig. 1 Extended Middle Missouri site distribution

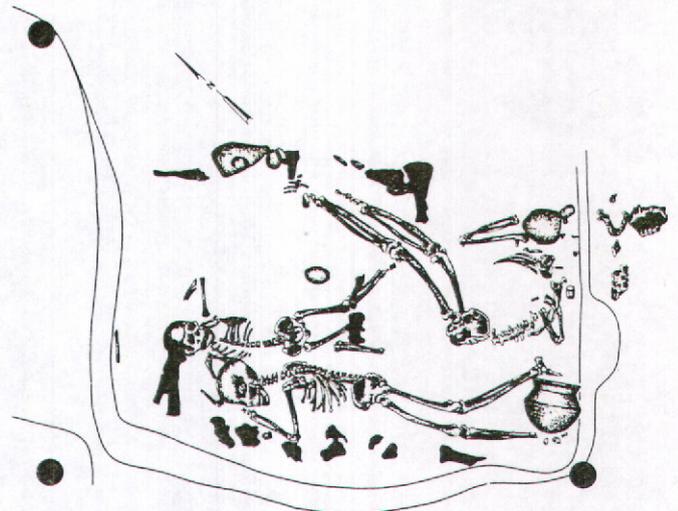


Fig. 2 Skeletons of warfare victims at the Fay Tolton site.
(After Wood 1976:28, Fig. 5)

the Fay Tolton site in Stanley County, which was the northernmost Initial Middle Missouri settlement. Three human skeletons were sprawled on a floor of the southeast corner of one lodge. The lodge had been burned and there was a considerable amount of debris and artifacts, including a whole pot, scattered around the skeletons. One of the individuals was a child about 8 years old and the other two were females between the ages of 12 and 17. The skeleton of a male between 29 and 35 years old had been crammed into a cache pit in the northeast corner of the house with his head and shoulders above the level of the floor. The situation in this lodge indicates that the skeletons were not placed there as a result of burial but rather as a result of some sort of warfare activity.

One of the debates about the Extended Middle Missouri tradition is the origin of the complex. Some archaeologists believe that this complex developed from the same parent stock as the Initial Middle Missouri groups from the southwestern corner of present-day Minnesota, northwestern Iowa and eastern South Dakota. At a slightly later date, these groups followed the chain of glacial lakes to the northeast and became established in the northern concentration of Extended Middle Missouri sites. Even later, perhaps in the 1300's or early 1400's, they moved southward. Some recent research, however, suggests that the Extended Middle Missouri tradition may actually have been a development directly out of the Initial Middle Missouri tradition.

Extended Coalescent Variant

Just as the Extended Middle Missouri tradition may have been an outgrowth of the Initial Middle Missouri tradition, the Extended Coalescent variant is a direct outgrowth of the Initial Coalescent tradition. Many of the materials of the Extended Coalescent tradition seem to be modifications or expansions of the material culture started during the Initial Coalescent. These changes were originated within the Initial Coalescent and not from outside the Coalescent tradition as may have been the case with the Initial and Extended Middle Missouri variants.

The distribution and range of the Extended Coalescent tradition represents an apparently dramatic explosion of

sites and villages. More than 100 sites have been reported over the nearly 475 river miles between the mouth of the White River and the North Dakota-South Dakota border. These sites were not all large, fortified villages as in the Initial Coalescent period, but, rather, many of them were small campsites that probably had a short period of occupation. The large number of sites reported for the Extended Coalescent may be therefore misleading. The numbers of sites are probably more related to the lifestyle of the people rather than to the small population increase that occurred.

The house structures of the Extended Coalescent were continuations of the patterns of the circular earthlodge structures of the Initial Coalescent but there was immense variation. While the ideal house may have been circular with an entryway, a central firepit, and four primary posts supporting a superstructure, this ideal was met in only a relatively small number of instances. In some cases there is little evidence of entryways; firepits are sometimes not in the center of the structure and in some instances there are not four central support posts. Some have suggested that there were other kinds of structures for the Extended Coalescent as well. These include such things as circular, lopsided, curvilinear, and oval forms which may have been used as a kind of tipi-like pole structure. These structures may have been hurriedly built and used for only short periods of time. Architecture during the Extended Coalescent in some instances was rather sloppy and hastily built.

While the houses show some variability, the greatest variation is seen in the settlement pattern of the peoples. There seems to have been an effort to go back to the settlement pattern of the earlier Central Plains tradition. Many of the settlements of the Extended Coalescent variant were very small clusters of houses, irregularly scattered over the surface. Many houses were single units or were small groups that were spread out for very long distances on ridges or along the terrace of the Missouri River. Some of the sites may also have been winter camps located on the flood plains of the Missouri River where they were better protected. The best example of such a site is the Spain site in Lyman County, South Dakota. Most sites had very small amounts of trash and yielded very few artifacts which indicates that they were used for only short periods of time. This suggests that the groups of the Extended Coalescent were very mobile.

Fortifications were rather rare around Extended Coalescent sites. When fortified sites did exist, they had houses that were very closely packed inside extensive fortifications. The deposits of refuse indicate long term occupation. Also of interest is the fact that fortifications have primarily been found around Extended Coalescent sites which were on the northern and southern ends of the Extended Coalescent range. The fortification ditches at the ends of the Extended Coalescent range indicate that the group was very well established over the range but that some kind of conflict, perhaps with groups of the Extended Middle Missouri tradition were occurring in the north. The southern groups may have been concerned about contact with incoming Oneota peoples or perhaps their relatives, the Pawnee, who were establishing villages and expanding their culture in Nebraska. One of the best examples on the south end of the range is the Extended Coalescent component at



Fig. 3 Extended Coalescent site distribution

the Scalp Creek site in Gregory County. This site was protected by a fortification ditch across a promontory above the river. Some 15 houses were surrounded by this fortification and its palisade. In the north, the fortified sites were located from just north of the Cheyenne River to the area above the Moreau River. These sites had ditches with palisades and a few bastions, very much like some of the Initial Coalescent sites.

The material culture of the Extended Coalescent villages is in some ways similar but in many ways different from that of other groups. Stone, bone and shell artifacts tend to be very similar to those of the Initial Coalescent. Diffusion of ideas and artifacts from the Middle Missouri tradition do appear in the late Coalescent sites. These include such things as the metatarsal flesher and the L-shaped antler fleshing adzes. Most of the chipped stone artifacts found in



Fig. 4 Elk antler adze used to process hides into leather

both Extended and Initial Coalescent are very similar to those of the Middle Missouri tradition. Distinguishing between the styles of artifacts is very difficult but the Middle Missouri tradition groups frequently used Knife River flint as their primary source of material while those of the Coalescent traditions used materials like chalcedony, jasper, quartzite, cherts and other materials found in the glacial tills.

Extended Coalescent pottery can easily be distinguished from pottery of the Middle Missouri groups but was similar in many ways to Initial Coalescent ceramics. The temper used in Extended Coalescent pottery was very sparse and was smaller in size than that of the other groups. This resulted in a very compact paste which was harder and fired at higher temperatures than Middle Missouri varieties. The walls of the pots were usually very thin and in some cases the walls may have been too thin for the size of the vessel so that breakage would have often occurred. The exteriors of the vessels were usually plain or simple stamped, though cord-roughening appeared in rare instances. Rim forms were limited to straight or curved cross sections. A few flared rims and very deeply curved S-rims like those of the Initial Coalescent and Middle Missouri groups appeared. The way the S-rims were shaped, however, was generally very different. In many instances the lips of the vessels were no thicker than the walls of the vessels, but in some instances the lips were thickened and made into T-shapes or inverted L-shapes. These apparently foreshadowed the braced rims of the Post-Contact Coalescent.



Fig. 5 Examples of Extended Coalescent pottery. Note T-shape of rim.

Terminal Middle Missouri

During the span from approximately 1550 A.D. to 1675 A.D., during which the Extended Coalescent expansion occurred, the Terminal Middle Missouri tradition peoples developed in the area just above the mouth of the Grand River. The range of the Terminal Middle Missouri was very limited when compared to Extended Middle Missouri tradition. The variant has few more than 40 sites reported.

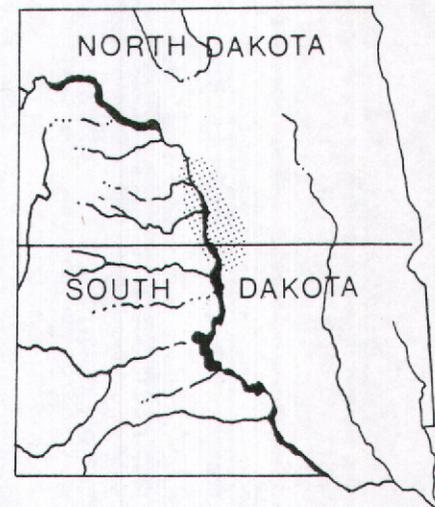


Fig. 6 Terminal Middle Missouri site distribution

Terminal Middle Missouri sites had long rectangular houses as the dominant architectural form. These houses were very large and their size contrasted sharply with the smaller lodges of the northern Extended Middle Missouri villages. Only two Terminal Middle Missouri villages, Jake White Bull and Helb, have been reported in South Dakota; these were large fortified villages. Recent examination of these sites, however, has led some archaeologists to question whether these sites are actually part of Terminal Middle Missouri. The material culture from the Terminal Middle Missouri variant directly evolved from the Extended Middle Missouri tradition. This was particularly the case with ceramics. The major form for ceramic rims involved the

construction of an S-shape. In some instances, braces and fillets were added to the rim exterior. These forms show many similarities to the Extended Coalescent rims.

A Cultural Mosaic

The changes in the cultures living along the Missouri River in what is now South Dakota were intensive during this period. The most important consideration was the amount of inter-cultural contact going on. These contacts apparently led to conflicts between groups, much as those which had gone on during the Initial Coalescent period. Yet, even though the conflicts occurred, many cultural ideas and artifacts were exchanged between the groups. The groups made important adjustments to each other. Many of the adjustments might be considered relatively easy ones to make, perhaps because the cultures in many ways were very much alike but all adjustments between different groups can be difficult. This intense period of culture change foreshadowed the coming of the Sioux and the Europeans into the area shortly after 1700. Changes would be profound and many of the groups would simply be unable to cope.

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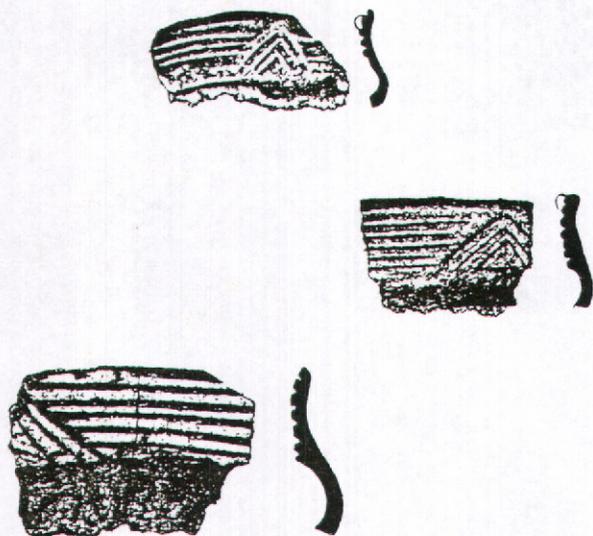


Fig. 7 Examples of Terminal Middle Missouri pottery. Note the S-shape of profiles.

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